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ABSTRACT

A practicum designed to help prospective teachers explore instructional approaches that differ from their intrinsic beliefs about how reading should be taught is described in this report. Particular emphasis was placed on using the whole language approach, as opposed to the more traditional basal reader or skills oriented approaches to reading. All student participants were placed in kindergarten, first, second, or third grade classrooms for implementation purposes. The practicum involved: (1) administration of pre- and post-surveys of teacher beliefs as related to classroom practices; (2) development of a pre- and post-questionnaire of whole language terminology; (3) requiring students to use literature-based lessons in their classrooms; (4) creation of teacher-made materials; (5) introduction of cooperative learning; (6) utilization of big books, dictated stories, and experience charts; (7) observation of students in field placements; and (8) organization of several oral presentations as a means of sharing ideas. Analysis of the data revealed that student participants used more holistic strategies in their classrooms and exhibited enthusiasm and inquisitiveness about whole language and its potential effectiveness. Post-survey results indicated that prospective teachers changed their attitudes toward the whole language approach and were more willing to reflect on how changes in classroom practice can be developed to meet the needs of beginning readers. (Two figures of data are included; 50 references, student questionnaires, a fieldwork observation report form, an introductory and follow-up letter to cooperating teachers, a mid-semester evaluation form, and the lesson plan format are attached.) (Author/RS)

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Expanding Prospective Teachers' Beliefs About the Reading Process to Enable Changes in Classroom Practice Through the Use of Whole Language

by

Jill Levin

Cluster 45

A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1992

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Jill Levin under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

June 29, 1992
Date of Final Approval of Report

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With love to my husband, Art Levin, who was an excellent proofreader; and to my mother, whose memory will always be in my heart... I dedicate this first practicum to her.

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ABSTRACT

Expanding Prospective Teachers' Beliefs About the Reading Process to Enable Changes in Classroom Practice Through the Use of Whole Language. Levin, Jill., 1992: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Teacher Education/Preservice Teacher Education/Reading Instruction/Beginning Reading/Primary Education/Early Childhood Education/Whole Language Approach/Language Experience Approach

This practicum was designed to help prospective teachers explore instructional approaches that differ from their intrinsic beliefs about how reading should be taught. Particular emphasis was placed on using the whole language approach, as opposed to the more traditional basal reader or skills oriented approaches to reading. All student participants were placed in Kindergarten, First, Second and Third Grade classrooms for implementation purposes.

The writer administered pre and post surveys of teacher beliefs as related to classroom practices; developed a pre and post questionnaire of whole language terminology; required students to use literature-based lessons in their classrooms; necessitated the creation of teacher-made materials; introduced cooperative learning; utilized big books, dictated stories, experience charts, observed students in field placements and organized several oral presentations as a means of sharing ideas.

Analysis of the data revealed that student participants used more holistic strategies in their classrooms, exhibited enthusiasm and inquisitiveness into whole language and its potential effectiveness. Post survey results indicated that prospective teachers changed their attitudes toward the whole language approach and were more willing to reflect on how changes in classroom practice can be developed to meet the needs of beginning readers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The writer teaches in a small, liberal arts, four year undergraduate college. Independent and coeducational, the college provides affordable private education that serves a diverse population of academically eligible students who live within commuting distance of the campus. Situated in a residential, suburban area, the college itself stands in the center of one of the nation's most distinctive academic communities, consisting of six colleges and universities within a two mile radius of each other. The college is designed specifically to accommodate the needs of a student population that is highly varied in age and background.

Non-traditional or adult students have been attracted to the strong career-oriented academic programs offered by the Division of General Studies. In addition, the Division of Arts and Sciences in which the writer teaches, offers degree programs for those adults who had interrupted their college careers or had attained an Associate Degree at a local two year community college. The majority of students work, either full or part-time, in order to afford the cost of tuition. The college makes available several tuition financing options, as well as tuition deferment programs

that are designed to afford students the opportunity to pay their educational expenses in monthly installments.

Although it is the policy of the college not to descriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national or ethnic origin, age,disability or marital status, the student body is composed of approximately 85% white, female traditional and non-traditional students. The college has engaged in collaboration with local high schools through Bridge Programs, which involve their seniors in college level courses, and offers community response to its newly completed 25,000 sq. ft. library. The repertory theatre is an integral part of the community and serves as a major entertainment and cultural source for the surrounding middle class working neighborhood.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is a full time faculty member in the Child Study Department at the college. She is an Instructor and Supervisor of students enrolled in the elementary or dual certification (both elementary and special education) degree programs. Her specific responsibilities include supervising student teachers in their Special Education Student Teaching Seminars and teaching curriculum and methods courses in special education and primary grade reading instruction (K-3).

In addition to teaching, the writer is a Faculty Advisor and confers with students on a regular basis in her office.

Advisement takes on many shapes and forms. Students are formally advised during registration as to courses to take that are related to their majors. Working with freshman and new transfer students is especially challenging, as the newness of college life for them rekindles enthusiasm for this writer. Advisement also includes the returning or non-traditional students. On the whole, this includes women who are returning to school after long absences, and would now like to complete their Bachelors Degree. This writer can easily relate to their concerns and fears, but her own philosophy about learning relates to the assumption that 'it is never too late.'

The writer is also a member of the Recommendations Committee and the Academic Development Committee (ADC). Both of these committees were formed to address the needs of those students whose academic performance is weak, either in their respective major departments or in their overall college record. Membership on these two committees affords the writer the opportunity to personally advise some of these students, and suggest appropriate services and modifications that might improve classroom performance. The writer has always prided herself on being direct and honest with students, bearing in mind that self-esteem plays a role in all human potentiality.

The writer has been told that her office reflects her personality. Pictures of her own grown children abound, as

do posters of children engrossed in the magical world of childhood. Students frequently comment about the writer's 'Lefty' clock (the hands/numbers run counter clockwise). The doll house filled with figures of children never fails to entice the students to touch... quite a paradox to academia life.

Membership on the College Advisory Board affords the writer opportunity to interact with both faculty, students and the Academic Dean. This committee considers student reactions to college policies, upcoming student events and is open to student opinions and suggestions. In addition to committee membership,the writer serves as Moderator for the Child Study Club. This enables her to meet and work with students in an informal and extremely satisfying setting.

For the purposes of this practicum, the writer has chosen to involve those students who are enrolled in her reading methods courses, which are entitled: Reading and Language Arts: Primary Grades. These two courses are comprised of students who are in the first semester of their junior year at the college. Classes range in size from about 20 to no more than 35 students per class. This permits the writer to personalize her classes more and to recognize each student by name. Total enrollment in the writer's reading methods courses consisted of 43 students. Of the 43 students, there were 2 males, 7 non-traditional

females and 34 traditional females. The majority of students were white; only two students were Hispanic and one student was disabled. All of the students were Child Study majors at the college. Since this is the first of two required reading methods courses, all students must pass this course before being permitted to move on in their programs, and ultimately student teach in their senior year. Of the 43 students, 23 were elementary education majors and 20 were dual certification majors.

This writer has always strived to prepare her students for the immense responsibility of teaching elementary and special education in the public and private schools today. The objective of a teacher training program is to prepare a student to be competent in professional skills, human relations and specialized knowledge areas. It is the writer's hope that her students will ultimately go beyond competence and be confident enough to change classroom practice to enhance learning.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

During the past several years, the writer had become cognizant of a recurring problem concerning prospective teachers. The problem related to students in the writer's primary grade reading methods courses who were reluctant to explore instructional approaches that differed from their intrinsic beliefs about how reading should be taught. Although the precepts of a whole language approach were emphasized, it had negligible impact on students. The teaching of reading, even from the very beginning, in kindergarten and first grade, should be guided by a vision of children as literate citizens of the future. Such a vision will encourage students to give children a wide variety of lessons and opportunities for exploration in learning to read.

There is more for prospective teachers to know about reading than about any other part of the elementary school curriculum. Reading and writing instruction are complex, yet exciting processes. It was to the writer's dismay that her students were not acutely aware of the changes that have occurred in this field. It was disturbing to witness a

young generation of future teachers enter today's reading methods courses with the same ideals and teaching strategies used when they were children, or worse, when the writer was a child!

It had become apparent to the writer that a majority of her students in the primary reading methods courses were often comprised of transfer students. In addition to being new to the college community, these students had the added responsibility of beginning their field experiences. Furthermore, this course served as an inception into the student's future role as a professional in the field. Yet, instead of integrating and supporting a broadening definition of literacy in terms of the young beginning reader, these novice teachers relied on the traditional. Whether it was for security, lack of motivation, embarrassment over their budding creative efforts or the sheer ease of simply following a pre-planned curriculum, the writer regretted that most of her students were hesitant, if not somewhat averse to developing new reading strategies and instructional practices in their classrooms.

The composition of classrooms today is changing. Young children with disabilities start school alongside their non-disabled peers. Grouping begins almost as soon as a child walks in the door on that first day of school, when the teacher begins administering screening tests to determine achievement level. Almost half of my reading methods students were dual certification majors, seeking degrees in both elemen-

tary and special education. The other half were elementary majors who, in their own words, do not want to be involved with "those" children. Armstrong (1987) stated, "We hear so much about the learning disabled child in the news media. It's probably truer to say that these children are worksheet disabled, curriculum dysfunctional, or dysteachic" (p. 40).

The students in my reading methods classes have had histories of teachers talking at them, not to them. They listen to lectures, and frontal teaching takes place in the absence of any true interaction with students. Taylor (1991) aptly stated, "The goal of the system is to make him fit, to be the same, to conform to the pattern, and to learn one way, but never his way" (p.91). If this is the case, then it is up to our future teachers to implement changes in their classrooms.

One of the most exciting approaches to the teaching of reading today is whole language. Whole language, as related to reading in education, is not immediately achieved. It is a process that evolves slowly, and involves the whole child, and the writer would like to add, the whole teacher. Whole language is much more than an alternative to the basal reader. It is a philosophy of curriculum, of learning, of teaching and of language. Whole language redefines reading and writing as processes for making sense out of and through written language.

The problem was that prospective teachers' intrinsic

beliefs about the reading process prevented them from changing classroom practice to meet the needs of beginning readers. It had become obviously clear to the writer that promoting a whole language approach was not enough. Her students must experience it.

Problem Documentation

Evidence that supported this problem included questionnaires, self-reports, interviews, profiles, classroom and fieldwork observations. During the Fall 1990 semester, this writer had first noted that 15 out of 21 students she observed in various classes, relied primarily on the basal reader and worked with homogeneous reading groups. The writer should remark that the students were not given specific directions for their observation lessons, only that they were required to write a lesson plan which would be handed to the writer on the day of the observation. Although most observations occurred after mid-semester, it was evident that students seemed most comfortable using the teacher manual and traditional strategies.

After observing these students in the field, the writer decided to emphasize the importance of broadening or expanding options for primary readers by offering her own students opportunities to use teacher-made materials, designed to enhance specific skills, rather than use dittoes or work sheets. Students were required to present teacher-made materials

in class and share information on how they could be used. In-class observations during oral presentations at the end of each semester in the 1990-1991 school year demonstrated that most students were unsure of the effectiveness of their teacher-made materials and embarrassed by their creative efforts.

During the Spring 1991 semester, the writer distributed the Conceptual Framework of Reading Interview for preservice teachers (Vacca, Vacca & Gove, 1991). This interview served as a springboard for students to discover their implicit beliefs about the reading process. The writer informed her students that the Interview would have no bearing on their grade for the course and they were to answer each question with honesty. The results indicated that 24 of the 35 students at that time preferred teaching reading through a strong bottom-up theory or skill oriented approach.

As the result of her students' obvious discomfort and reluctance to reflect upon how intrinsic beliefs can affect classroom practice, the writer decided to begin encouraging self-examination at the beginning of the Fall 1991 semester. During the first class, she distributed a Student Questionnaire listing reading terms (Appendix A) associated with whole language. Results indicated that 56 out of 68 students enrolled that semester, did not know what was meant by whole language. The students were informed beforehand that the results of the Questionnaire would not affect their grade and that if they

were unsure of an answer, they were free to indicate it as such. Students appeared visibly relieved with these preliminary directions and responded honestly.

To further her investigation into the problem of prospective teachers' reluctance to expand their beliefs about the reading process in order to change classroom practice, the writer distributed the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (DeFord, 1985) or TORP during the second week of the Fall 1991 semester. Once again all of the students were informed to answer as honestly as possible, with the knowledge that no grade would be affected. As a result, all 66 of the students present on that day participated with a reasonable amount of interest: 19 had a Phonic theoretical orientation, 35 had Skills theoretical orientation and 12 had a Whole Language theoretical orientation to reading instruction. Graves (1983) stated that, "Children revise their work. Teachers must revise theirs... Growth in teaching revision is a lifelong process... This is the joy and energy of teaching" (p. 293). It appeared that teaching revision would be the writer's ultimate challenge during this practicum.

There are basically two different ways in which reading and writing and the learning of it can be experienced: either as something of great practical value, important if one wants to get ahead in life; or as the source of unlimited knowledge and fascination. Which of these two ways or in what combination of them the primary grade child will experience being taught

reading and writing depends upon the methodologies used. The image of literacy impressed upon the young beginning reader by those who shape his views of things during his most impressionable years is decisive. Smith (1985) stated that "what the teacher needs is an understanding of the particular possibilities and costs (to the child) of different methods and materials, an understanding of the particular children and what they find easy and difficult... without such understanding, teachers cannot make up their own minds about methods and materials and are forced to fall back on the exhortations of experts or the blandishments of publishers" (p. 6).

Causative Analysis

The writer believes there were several possible causes of the problem. All students in her reading methods courses were required to participate in a primary grade classroom (K-3) once a week, for a complete morning. Students were placed by the 'Placement Coordinator' according to which schools had appropriate openings, which principals would accept methods students, and which teachers would accept students. As of this writing, it had been impossible to select the most effective cooperating teachers, for ultimately, the decision lied with the individual building principal and not with the Placement Coordinator or the faculty. Most fieldwork placement classrooms used basal readers and divided children into homogeneous reading groups.

This situation caused problems for the writer's students

for they were unable to obtain clear modeling of whole language strategies in the reality of the primary classroom. According to Cooter and Flynt (1989), some teachers tend to get into "comfort zones" (p. 281) in their classrooms. What has worked reasonably well in the past tends to become a permanent fixture in a curriculum. Certainly, basal readers have worked reasonably well in the past, as most students had indicated on their Questionnaire that they had remembered being taught to read using basals. However, the writer feels that children might learn to read 'in spite of the basals.'

This led to another cause of the problem which related to the fact that the novice teacher was intimidated by his/her cooperating teacher and hesitated to use or suggest using whole language strategies that were emphasized in coursework. This intimidation, in and of itself, resulted in yet another cause of the problem. Since basal readers and teacher manuals were provided by the cooperating teachers, students were easily lulled into following the step-by-step instruction which capitalized on the insecurities of preservice teachers. Instead of implementing change in their fieldwork placements, students tended to cling to the 'perceived' acceptable, the safe, the traditional.

This contributed to the fact that yet another cause of the problem was that students did not have enough opportunity to experiment with various reading approaches in both their fieldwork and their coursework. In turn, this generated a

final cause of the problem, which entailed students' distrust in their own potential for creativity and ingenuity. Therefore, the problem remained; reluctance to explore instructional approaches that differed from intrinsic beliefs about the reading process, preventing change in classroom practice to meet the needs of the primary grade reader.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Reviewing the literature has demonstrated that classroom practice is greatly influenced and substantially determined by teachers' underlying thinking. Although the literature has consistently shown that teachers can make a difference in student success, a preliminary review of the literature revealed that this concept has been expanded to include the teachers' own thoughts, as well as theoretical orientation to teaching.

Isenberg (1990), Mills and Clyde (1991) and Hollingsworth (1989), support the fact that what a teacher believes about teaching, learning and the nature of children, can serve as the springboard for expanding or limiting the opportunities for children to achieve their potential. Much of our practical knowledge is implicit. Therefore, teachers' reasons for selecting certain strategies may not be clearly understood until teachers try to explain their actions. This practical knowledge enables the teacher to make decisions about her curr-

iculum. Thus, theories and beliefs about teaching serve as an organizing unit that forms the basis for classroom decisions and behaviors. Teachers need opportunity to "reflect upon their beliefs, reconcile differences in new approaches, and be able to change or transform earlier beliefs" (Hollingsworth, 1989, p.698) to apply to classroom practice.

The whole language philosophy has spread rapidly through elementary schools, although the basal reader approach still dominates many reading curriculums. College students, particularly methods students, are used to more structured learning situations common to the environment of academia. The ancient proverb, "Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand" (Heney, 1990, p.2) applies to all learners, whether they be adults or children. Thoughtful teaching is central to professional growth. When students reflect upon instruction, they can analyze the results of their decisions on children. Students who set out to improve their own learning through study, thought and experience increase their contributions to schooling, children and good practice. Even though the lessons that come from teachers' beliefs reflect teachers' best intentions, not all belief systems are of equal benefit to children. This is why the writer feels that her students should carefully examine their own assumptions.

Additional literature gives evidence to the fact that

prospective teachers' beliefs about classroom instruction and the reading process can influence future classroom practices. The writer's reading methods students bring more than just their desire to teach to their teacher education. They bring their biographies, their cumulative experience of school life. "The hidden work of the student teacher really involves negotiating past and present demands" (Britzman, 1986, p. 443). Students' personal beliefs and histories interact with our culture to maintain current or traditional teaching practices. Mere talk about the tremendous changes that the fields of reading and language arts have undergone in the last 15 years will fail to provide students with a strong enough base to "combat the force" (Brazee & Kristo, 1986, p.422) of traditional practices encountered in fieldwork placements.

It is interesting to note that most students have never had the opportunity to analyze their own teaching styles. Stice, Bertrand, Leuder and Dunn (1989) contend that relationships among certain personality characteristics and certain theoretical orientations to teaching reading result in students' reluctance to apply new concepts and practices in their own classrooms. For example, the writer's more analytic students are concerned with details, rules, procedures and directions. Yet, her global students prefer general guidelines, variety, alternatives and different approaches. Dunn (1988) states that "the way you introduce a lesson can be

the key to your students' success... but what if you're using the wrong key" (p.71). Personality characteristics and beliefs can be important to the understanding of receptivity to new information. The writer has, on occasion, used the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, 1972) to help students identify personality preferences and problem solving style. If anything, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator developed student awareness of the confinements of inflexibility. In general, most students pay little attention to the way they introduce material, and this relates directly to the problem contained in this paper. For, in fact, intrinsic beliefs may cause prospective teachers to teach in a way that is backwards to the way many children learn. This correlates directly with the contention that "if we teach children to speak the way we teach them to read, we'd have a nation of stutterers" (Armstrong, 1987, p. 40).

The ultimate challenge for the prospective teacher is to develop more sensitivity to listening, observing and talking to children, rather than at them. This can only be accomplished by expanding one's own perceptions of learning. Ducksworth (1986) states that "what one believes about teaching and learning is complicated, large-scale, hard to define and close to the soul" (p.486). When novice teachers are encouraged to use whole language in teaching reading, they are being encouraged to take risks.

When one can learn from experiences, and ultimately make

changes in one's future behavior, the growth of that person is positive. The composition of the children in public schools is changing, and so must perspectives on teaching. Raths (1989) asserts that todays' teachers must learn how to work with the children in front of them. Methods students face a tremendous variety of academic situations. Learning to teach reading and writing is an ongoing process, just as the precepts of a whole language philosophy is continually evolving and expanding to meet the needs of beginning readers (Rosberg, 1989).

Review of the literature further connects the need for reform and change in classroom practice with preservice teacher training. Watkins (1990) examines teacher education programs and suggests these courses of study become "centers of pedagogy" (p.18), in which professors and teachers work together to improve education and train teachers. It is not just a question of adding more courses, but making the ones we offer more effective. Viadero (1990) contends that prospective teachers need to learn what to teach at the same time they are taught how to teach. The writer agrees that the students' needs cannot be met in a structured course of study, but through the creation of a more powerful whole of liberal arts and professional studies.

Instead of relying on traditional paradigms of learning Barbour (1988) states that prospective teachers need to "acquire independence and responsibility for children's learning by changing required curriculum in order to develop greater autonomy in

the classroom. In order to accomplish this, coursework must be expanded to the "context of the broader framework of their lives" (Brand, 1991, p. 19). Teacher training and school restructuring are closely related. Undergraduate students must develop an awareness of teaching young children. This awareness must include practical opportunity for students to question their past, present and future.

Literature review connected to profound changes in the teaching of reading suggest that whole language represents a new paradigm. The idea is that literacy instruction should involve the integration of reading and writing activities centered on the language and experiential background of the learner. A basic tenet of whole language is that language facility is acquired and refined through use. The learner is respected; his or her abilities or background are valued. Novice teachers must be able to provide a broad perspective for updating and improving reading instruction. According to Wood and O'Donnell (1991), changes in reading instruction from basals to literature are likely to continue and endure.

Whole language is often viewed as a set of beliefs rather than a specific methodology. The premise of this paper states that beliefs affect methodology, yet specific methodology is not prescribed! Instead, Goodman (1989) maintains that teachers need to develop their own values to encompass whole language as a philosophy of learning,

not just an alternative to basals. As one implements whole language, practice gets ahead of theory and research. Literature is an integral part of a whole language classroom. Through literature, primary grade readers start to develop their reasoning powers and critical thinking abilities. The concept is that language skills develop holistically as one has something to read, or to write or to think about. Reading need not be separated into parts, for it is best learned from the top down, starting with books, rather than individual letters and sounds. In order to instill an appreciation for books and reading in children, methods students will need to be more open to the premise underlying whole language (Quigley, 1989).

The past 30 years have been a time of experimentation and debate in literacy teaching. We each come to the teaching of any area or topic with our lifetime of experiences and talents. It is not often, however, that we take inventory of those experiences and talents and reflect on how they might affect the primary child. The key is to be attuned to children's perceptions and adjust instruction to be congruent with their ways of thinking. Chall (1989) claims that most prospective teachers unwittingly continue the "relentless debate over phonics and whole language, when in reality they need to develop the skills and tools to know that whole language encompasses both indirect and direct teaching (p. 52). Heightened awareness of the need for new directions in teaching reading and writing are advan-

vancing. When Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1963) wrote, "I reach a hand into the mind of the child, bring out a handful of the stuff I find there, and use that as our first working material" (p.31), she embodied the essence of whole language as we have come to know it today. The shift from product to process orientation instruction has changed the teacher's role. Various fads in reading instruction come and go. As perspective teachers come to realize that differences among children impact on appropriateness and effectiveness of any program design, they can begin to alter instruction on the basis of their own observations and judgment. The trends in reading instruction from basals to literature transcend any specific programs, labels and materials. Instead, they provide a broad perspective for updating and improving literacy instruction that will result in lasting changes.

It is common knowledge that teachers have the potential to greatly enhance or seriously limit their children's feelings of self-worth, achievement and behavior. Teaching methods are important, especially when prospective teachers today must face daily realities of mainstreamed classes and all the intricacies involved therein. Literature review of the research connects the needs of at-risk or disabled young readers with quality instruction. Research suggests that many children's difficulties in learning to read are directly related to the type of instruction they receive (Mason & Au, 1990).

There is every indication that whole language can enhance

beginning reading instruction for disabled children in the same positive ways as for any child. Enabling the young disabled child to develop an enthusiasm for books and a willingness to share ideas results in growth in both language and literacy. Roser, Hoffman and Farest (1990) agree that all children, whether at-risk, disabled or otherwise, benefit from efforts to include literature and related instructional strategies into reading and language arts programs. The writer's reading methods students will be faced with the inevitable, yet desirable and indeed essential differences among both non-disabled and disabled readers. Her students need to develop workable strategies that are applicable to the regular classroom and appropriate for a wide range of readers. Teachers need to be able to maximize the participation of disabled readers by using whole language activities which capitalize on their strong oral language skills (Ford & Ohlhausen, 1988).

The main idea is that reading instruction given to young children with special needs should be much like the reading instruction given to all children. For years, educators have spent time trying to place children with special needs into categories. This process of labeling is not at all precise, for our time is better spent on good teaching. Almost all children can make good progress in learning to read if they receive the appropriate quality of instruction. Dreher and Singer (1989) emphasize the importance of preservice

teachers learning to "reorganize, modify or replace packaged lessons" (p. 615) according to their own instructional purposes in order to meet the needs of the various children in their classrooms. The tendency of the novice teacher is to focus solely on work identification. Reading programs which emphasize word identification or phonics to the exclusion of comprehension and vocabulary building are sometimes presented as a remedy for children's reading problems. Trachtenburg and Ferruggia (1989), describe teachers' reluctance to attempt using a whole language approach to reading, but dispel such fears by illustrating how so called skill instruction can flow naturally and logically to benefit high risk beginning readers through the use of big books.

The notion of failure to achieve associated with young disabled readers can be handicapping to all children. By placing the blame for a child's reading difficulty on some mysterious neurological deficiency in the brain, we ignore the fact that these difficulties might instead relate to much needed reform within the classroom environment. Prospective teachers need to concentrate on a child's strengths, rather than his weaknesses.

This relates directly to Carbo's research (1988) on learning and reading styles. She suggests that matching instruction with children's reading styles results in greater reading fluency and comprehension. Holistic methods of reading have been found to match most closely the reading

styles of young children and at-risk readers. Every year, millions of children across the nation are being labeled as learning disabled, dyslexic, hyperactive or underachievers. Einstein once wrote, "It is nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry" (Armstrong, 1987, p. 3).

The writer maintains that for the most part, prospective teachers who lack instructional flexibility often do more of the same when children are not succeeding. Successful instructional environments are those in which teachers have a variety of strategies and adjust their teaching based on children's performance. It is reasonable to assume that the same instructional approach cannot be used consistently with each child. No one instructional approach meets the needs of all special learners. However, the writer's reading methods students must develop awareness of the fact that a sound reading program for children with special needs should go beyond the basics. Reading instruction for children with special needs should be broad in scope, bringing out the many different functions of literacy. Reluctance to explore beyond the traditional hinders prospective teachers from providing special needs children with a well-balanced program of reading instruction. Changes in classroom practice will ultimately affect children's potential in and outside of the classroom.

In many reading methods classes, a discrepancy exists

between what we want our students to learn and how we teach. Most traditional preservice classes tend to consist primarily of lecture format and students' independent reading of course texts. Kelly and Farnan (1990) found that in order for preservice teachers to expand their beliefs about reading instruction and the reading process as a whole, teacher educators must themselves model instructional approaches. This writer is in full agreement with the authors. Teacher education classes should provide the dual opportunity of enhancing the students' content learning, as well as providing process models. At the college level, students are exposed to materials that are new and concepts that are sometimes bewildering. They benefit, in much the same way as the younger students they will eventually teach from instruction that helps them retain and organize information and that bridges the gap between passive and active learning. It appears likely to the writer, that strategies modeled in the reading methods classroom will be incorporated into future classes more easily than if these students had never experienced them in their own learning.

Daves, Morton and Grace (1990) further support the premise of active student involvement when they discuss the effectiveness of preparing preservice teachers through opportunity for the students to actually use the instructional strategies taught in their reading courses. Complications can arise, however, as the writer is cognizant of the discrepancy between what is cultivated in her reading methods courses and

what is being promoted within particular field placement classrooms. Tunnell and Jacobs (1989) discuss the predominant usage of basal readers in classrooms today, and the difficulty or resistance to change. Prospective teachers need to see connections between pedagogy and materials in order to create meaningful whole language reading experiences. It is the practical classroom application of theory that enables the preservice teacher to affect children's learning and growth (Fountas & Hannigan, 1989). If whole language is to become more than just a passing fad, however, methods students must be afforded opportunities to become part of it. This cannot be left to chance alone. The more knowledgeable and experienced novice teachers become, the better they are able to create contexts for learning that are meaningful because they are whole.

Wood and O'Donnell (1991) contend that "reading and writing are the skills" (p. 102), but teachers are not free from dependence on the dictates of administrators, or the inflexibility of curriculum guides. While prospective teachers might express a desire to make adjustments in reading instructional practices, they are hesitant to do so without the support of their cooperating teachers. There appears to be an obvious need for communication and collaboration between the writer and the various cooperating teachers her students are placed with. Benware and Deci (1984) state

that opportunity to use information learned facilitates changes in one's beliefs about learning and teaching. Students need to have recent experiences with a more active type of learning paradigm in order to recognize the passivity of the more traditional learning paradigm. Fully holistic classrooms do not miraculously develop. However, when students are afforded opportunities to actively improve conceptual learning, it would seem to be of central importance to fascilitating intrinsically motivated learning.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum. The students in the writer's reading methods courses will expand their beliefs about the reading process by experimenting and implementing a variety of whole language instructional practices that differ from traditional learning paradigms. In turn, the writer's students will become more competent in adapting and adjusting teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of beginning readers. These goals will transcend to classroom practice, for the writer's students will ultimately be challenged to connect course pedagogy within their fieldwork environment.

Expected Outcomes

By the end of the implementation period, this writer expects to achieve specific outcomes. The Student Questionnaire of Reading Terms (Appendix A) associated with whole language and literature based reading programs indicated that 38 of the 43 students in the writer's reading methods classes did not know what was meant by whole language and were unfamiliar with the terms included in the Questionnaire. At the end of

the practicum implementation, all students will know what is meant by whole language and will be familiar with associated terms. The writer will administer a Revised Questionnaire of Reading Terms (Appendix B) during class time. She will allow no more than one half hour to complete all of the questions which can be answered in two to five sentences each. The Revised Questionnaire will contain the same reading terms, but will provide students an opportunity to write about how their beliefs about the reading process have/have not changed since the start of this practicum.

The Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile(Deford, 1985) indicated that 42 of the 43 students in the writer's primary reading methods courses prefer teaching reading through a phonic or skills oriented approach. By the end of the implementation period, 2/3 of the students will demonstrate a more interactive or holistic orientation to reading instruction.

Field observations of previous students in their fieldwork classrooms indicated that students tended to rely on the basal reader and teacher manual. After the practicum implementation, field observations and student self-reports will demonstrate that all 43 students are devoting 25% less teaching time to basal reader instruction and 25% more teaching time to literature based instruction than at the beginning of their field experience. The writer shares responsibility for observing and supervising all reading methods students in the field with other members of the faculty. She will evaluate the students

through the use of the department Fieldwork Observation Report (Appendix C). In addition, follow-up conferencing between the writer, the cooperating teacher and the individual students will enable students to self-report orally on changes in classroom practices. Comments will be recorded in the writer's log.

This writer expects to achieve success in establishing cooperating teacher support which will enable students to integrate the curriculum with literature. Conferences with students before and after class, and during the writer's office hours indicate that the students are not able to actually teach, but instead follow the cooperating teacher's plans. By the end of the practicum implementation, all students will have taught at least three lessons utilizing whole language strategies discussed in class. Cooperating teachers will receive an Introductory Letter (Appendix D), as well as a Follow-Up Letter (Appendix E) and a Mid-Semester Evaluation Form (Appendix F), which will indicate at least three lessons taught by the student and critiqued by the cooperating teacher. The interaction between the writer and the cooperating teachers will encourage communication between the college and the schools, which will provide opportunity for more complete monitoring of students' progress.

Since most students in her primary reading methods classes are embarrassed by their own attempts at originality and ingenuity in teaching reading, the writer is particularly interested

in achieving her outcome in this area. In-class observations during oral presentations demonstrate that students were visibly uncomfortable and unsure of the effectiveness of their attempts at creating teacher-made materials. At the end of the implementation period, at least 2/3 of the students will display confidence in their efforts to enhance reading instruction through the use of teacher-made materials. Students will indicate the effective use of their materials through a written Lesson Plan Format (Appendix G), which will include a self-evaluation or teacher reflection section. All students will be required to complete this section after using their teacher-made materials in fieldwork classrooms. Oral presentations during class time will include the sharing and demonstration of all teacher-made materials.

The Conceptual Framework of Reading Interview (Vacca, Vacca & Gove, 1991) will be given to all students at the completion of implementation. Students will be permitted to answer the questions at home and return the completed Interview one week later at the beginning of class. The Conceptual Framework of Reading Interview will encourage students to make connections between their beliefs about the reading process and their classroom practice. Students who engage in reflection and analysis of their beliefs are more intrinsically motivated toward positive change which results in perceived competence and better performance (Benware & Deci, 1984). By the end of the implementation phase of the practicum, the Conceptual

Framework of Reading Interview will indicate that 2/3 of the students have expanded their beliefs about the reading process and classroom practice.

The anticipated outcomes that this writer expects to achieve at the completion of the practicum will encourage students to change the beliefs and practices they have brought with them from their past, in order to become more effective in their future teaching. Furthermore, to learn for the future, it is the writer's opinion that students must reflect on their past and present experiences involving teaching and learning. According to Short and Burke (1989), "When learners have the opportunity to assume different perspectives on the same phenomenon, they are able to focus, shift and transform their questions and so reach new understandings about the phenomenon" (p. 196).

Measurement of Outcomes

The writer used a variety of measurement tools which supported the integration of literature based or holistic approaches of learning and curriculum. The outcomes provided by these tools helped to shape the way students will teach in their own classrooms, by empowering them to actively search out new questions about the reading process. The emphasis of this practicum was on expanding prospective teachers' beliefs about read-

ing and the teaching of reading, through the use of whole language.

The writer used her open-ended Student Questionnaire of Reading Terms to measure the difference in strategy awareness between the beginning and the end of this practicum. These terms formed a basis for both new knowledge and new ways of teaching that knowledge. The students, in turn, experienced these terms in the reality of their field placement classrooms, as well as in their college classrooms.

The Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) is a survey instrument that the writer used initially to help students examine the relationship between their beliefs about reading and instructional practices. Most students, upon entering this writer's course for the first time, were unaware that these connections existed. The measurement tool was used to act as a catalyst for students to engage in reflection and inquiry into what goes on in their fieldwork classroom and what will eventually happen in their own future classroom. It was also a non-threatening approach to having students self-evaluate and reflect upon areas in need of exploration. Since students were aware that the TORP was self-graded, they were more apt to give honest answers.

Lesson Plan Formats were used as a guide and afforded a measurement of how well students focused their attention on integrating theory with learning. Fieldwork observation

Reports were used to keep an ongoing record of progress. Observations, both in the field and through oral presentations in class enabled the writer to determine whether course work and field experience were integrated at the performance or practical level, as comparisons were made between the beginning of implementation and the end.

The writer had always been aware of the discrepancy between the college classroom and the fieldwork classroom. The need to align daily instructional practices with the strategies cultivated in the writer's reading methods courses seemed apparent. Therefore, this writer attempted to work more closely with cooperating teachers in order to overcome the difficulties of translating the precepts of a whole language approach into practice. In addition to meeting cooperating teachers during field observations, the writer measured opportunities to teach afforded her students, through responses to the Mid-Semester Evaluation Form that all cooperating teachers received.

In summary, these evaluation instruments were all selected to provide a measurement of assessment of students expanding beliefs about the reading process through the use of whole language strategies and techniques which will ultimately affect changes in classroom practice.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem emphasized in this practicum related to the prospective teachers in the writer's primary grade reading methods courses. These students had demonstrated chronic reluctance to explore instructional approaches that differed from their intrinsic beliefs about how reading should be taught. Although the precepts of a whole language approach were emphasized, they had negligible impact on students. The philosophy of whole language promotes the perspective that reading is a process that develops through use; that children learn to read by reading; that the language arts should be integrated in the elementary curriculum; and that literacy is more readily acquired when language is used to communicate messages.

Analysis of this writer's reading courses revealed considerable diversity among her students' philosophical stances toward reading. However, the majority of students, as substantiated in the documentation, held the perspective that reading was a subject to be taught, and that children learned to read by mastering a series of skills. Beliefs

held were that reading should occupy a separate time period from other language arts, and that literacy was most readily learned when language was presented to children in teachable components.

Several solutions to the problem have been suggested through the literature. Joyce and Weil (1986) maintain that teacher educators should themselves model instructional approaches they expect their students to use. One way for teacher educators to enhance the traditional lecture format is by teaching content and process as a whole. This creates and models an instructional framework that more closely approximates what they want preservice teachers to use eventually in their own classrooms. Strategies and processes need to be overlaid into the content being taught. Much of the literature confirms and supports the belief that teacher education programs must indeed practice what is taught.

Benware and Deci (1984), as well as Kelly and Farnan (1990), believe reading methods courses should treat students as learners who are encouraged to engage actively in learning. Students who learn with the expectation of using that information facilitate intrinsic motivation towards assimilating new experiences to practice. It is a contention that most students come out of teacher education programs without a sense of their own voices or of themselves, as decision makers. They have learned to listen to others'

voices, but not to build from those voices in pursuing their own questions. If reading methods courses do not encourage students to change the beliefs and practices they bring with them from their past... to question, to shift, to focus and transform, students will tend to rely on other experts or prepackaged sets of ideas.

Only when students are given opportunities to practice literature-based reading, can they begin to understand how whole language approaches can build literacy. Through fieldwork, students deepen their knowledge about the effects of using trade books versus the traditional basal reader. At the very least, students are empowered to say the basal reader is not the only way to successfully teach children to read. When students are able to examine the effects of their own practices in their fieldwork classrooms, they take a big step toward creating learning environments in which readers thrive.

Shanklin and Rhodes (1989) suggested a solution to the problem by encouraging novice teachers to reconsider their beliefs through the sharing of creative teacher-made materials during oral presentations. Making presentations and discussing ideas with others encourages prospective teachers to reconsider their beliefs and to learn at a deeper level. Reluctant students gradually begin to take risks and build confidence when materials, thoughts and problems are shared. Classroom simulations during sharing

sessions can provide opportunity to test out ideas. The writer's methods students needed tools that would reflect the ever changing contexts of reading instruction. Using teacher-made materials challenged students to solve their instructional problems, by designing and implementing instruments that can be fundamental to their children's success as beginning readers.

Trachtenburg and Ferruggia (1989) propose to use the "power of whole language" (p. 284), to expand perspective beliefs through the use of enlarged texts called Big Books. Using literature as a springboard, students can embrace the philosophy of whole language, yet incorporate the requisite skillwork they fear will be neglected. The Big Book or Shared Experience Method is highly motivating. The pictures and print are oversized, so that a large group of children sitting around a teacher can follow along visually as the teacher reads. The language patterns in most Big Books are natural and rhythmic, and often feature repetitive refrains. Students can work with small groups of children, observing ability to 'finger-point read' small sections of the story or match spoken or target words to written words in an appropriate manner. Prospective teachers can be further challenged through using Big Books to create extended activities which would include sentence slotters, high frequency word books or page by page transparencies. There is no doubt that the Big Book represents one of the most important contributions to the beginning

reading field in the last thirty years. As compared to the basal reader, the Big Book offers another model by which children can explore how text is represented in lines of print. Reading methods students can benefit by the use of various strategies that will help children develop the concept of words, and in turn, enable changes in future classroom practice.

Improvement in reading occurs only when children read real texts. This is not reflected in basal reader programs. An elementary school child is likely to complete more workbook pages and skill sheets than necessary in the course of one school year (Anderson, 1985). This represents time that could be more profitably spent on real reading and writing activities. If the solution to this practicum problem was to be solved, prospective teachers needed to recognize the inherent weaknesses in commercial programs and become more aware of the value of exposure to good literature, which would empower them to move away from total dependence on basals. Whatever the form or degree of innovation on their part, it would lead students to changes in instructional emphasis.

Discription of Selected Solutions

After gleaning information from a review of the literature, it was apparent to this writer that the solution to the problem was to enable her students to bridge the gap

between her learning goals and actual learning. A combination of solutions came to mind. To begin, strategies and processes were overlaid into the content being taught. Students were afforded opportunities to practice these strategies in both the college classroom and their fieldwork classroom. In a review of Howard Gardner's new book entitled, The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach, Gurskey (1991) reflects that what is missing from literacy education today is not the decoding skills, but "the capacity to read for understanding and the desire to read at all" (p.41). In the area of literacy acquisition, there is considerable support for the use of a whole language approach to help children move toward desired goals.

If the writer hoped to help her prospective teachers expand and refine their knowledge about reading, she would have to help them confront and examine the beliefs they already held. In addition to using the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) for preservice teachers, the writer linked personal experience with course content and had students write on how they think they became readers. The writer's goal was to help her students connect the reading/writing process, recognize their prior knowledge about learning to read and the teacher's role in this process. The purpose of this activity was not to force students to

discard old ways of thinking, but to encourage them to recognize their beliefs and to consider beliefs in light of new ideas encountered in class.

As part of the solution to the practicum problem, students developed suggestions in the basal reader teacher manuals and reflected on whether these same practices were consistent with what had been learned about the reading process and how children became readers. Brainstorming was a most effective process for activating schema in our college classroom. The writer asked students to share their ideas, while she wrote them on the board. In this way, students were encouraged to change or add new information deemed relevant. In addition to brainstorming, the writer organized her classroom into cooperative learning groups relating to the grade level class assignments (K-3) of her students. This helped to facilitate and develop frames of reference for new material.

Cooperative peer interaction maximizes learning by supporting the development of higher order thinking and problem-solving abilities (Atkinson & Green, 1990). The aim of shared learning is to bring students together to teach and learn from one another. Cooperative learning was implemented into the writer's reading methods courses to further understanding of how this strategy could relate to enhancing sucess for at-risk or disabled beginning readers. In a shared learning environment, it is the

teacher's goal to involve each child as a participant and contributor. Teachers can lead children to value their own contributions and to appreciate peers as a learning resource. For instance, when grouped together, high, medium and low ability primary children can all derive higher quality reasoning strategies. The high ability children will attempt to instruct the others and,in the process, receive feedback and questions. Children needing further explanations formulate more questions and listen to explanations. It is the discussion from each child, not the ability level of the group members, that is a primary factor in promoting higher cognitive reasoning. It was the writer's hope that prospective teachers understood that cooperative learning also fostered necessary social skills which enable at-risk or disabled beginning readers to be more effectively mainstreamed into their primary grade classrooms.

In order to meet the demands of the diversity of needs in the primary classroom today, reading methods students must plan ahead and carefully choose objectives based on the needs of the child and the qualities of the material. This does not detract from the process of enjoying good literature. According to Osborn (1983), prospective teachers need to plan goals and procedures. This approach to planning gives methods students a guide to planning reading

lessons while using whole language material. Poor readers, for example, do not use all the language cues appropriate for comprehension and isolated practice may not transfer to real reading.

Solutions generated from the literature were attempted in the following manner. During the implementation period, students were required to formulate and prepare three lessons which were taught in their fieldwork placement classroom. These lessons encompassed a whole language, literature-based philosophy of teaching, so that students experienced, first hand, how these practices affect the motivation, enthusiasm and development of young readers. Depending on applicability, the students used experience charts, dictated stories, Big Books, journals, creative writing and invented spelling in their fieldwork classrooms.

Furthermore, this writer was in agreement with the literature on the benefits of teacher-made materials. Therefore, her students were required to create an original teacher-made material which could be used to enhance literacy development within their particular placement. This material took the form of a Big Book, puzzle, board game or flannel board, for example. In addition to teaching a lesson which incorporated this material into the curriculums of their fieldwork, students demonstrated and shared all materials in their college class through oral presentations and cooperative

learning groups.

Students were also observed in their field placements, with follow-up conferencing between the writer, the student and the cooperating teacher. Cooperating teachers assisted the writer in evaluating the students' practices in the classroom by means of the Mid-Semester Evaluation Form (Appendix F). The Questionnaire Checklist of Terms-Revised (Appendix B) was distributed, once again, at the completion of implementation to evaluate concept knowledge of whole language terms and strategies. The total of three lesson plans, including the teacher-made material, were used as further evaluation of students' self-analysis of the effectiveness of their whole language lessons. Finally, the Conceptual Framework of Reading Inventory for preservice teachers was administered at the end of the implementation period to assess changes in beliefs about the reading process as compared to beliefs held at the beginning of the semester.

In conclusion, the solutions to this problem encompassed ideas that stemmed from the literature, as well as additional holistic methodologies that the writer anticipated would provide incentives for students to expand their beliefs about the reading process and eventually change classroom practice. These solutions circumscribed the goals and objectives of this practicum, for students were afforded a variety of opportunities to integrate the curriculum with

literature and offer many alternatives for beginning readers to accomplish reading objectives. Ultimately, the reading methods students had more of a sense of themselves, as Kelly and Farnan (1990) so aptly described, and became decision makers in their classroom.

These solutions succeeded because of several factors. The writer acted as a role model during course work. Her enthusiasm and interest in her students' ability to expand their beliefs in order to change classroom practice served as a catalyst for active participation. Students gained confidence in their abilities through opportunity to actually implement strategies and approaches that were taught. Students were advised of the writer's availability in assisting their attempts, both before and after class, as well as by appointment in her office. Students were placed in primary grade (K-3) field placements and were required to attend one full morning per week, during the duration of this practicum. The writer worked with the placement coordinator and cooperating teachers to arrange a schedule for fieldwork observations. The writer arranged to have a variety of children's literature in her office at all times. In addition, she ended every class by reading aloud and sharing assorted children's stories with all of her students.

Report of Action Taken

Implementation began on Wednesday, January 22, 1992.

For the Spring semester, the writer's two reading methods classes consisted of 43 students, 20 of which were dual certification majors and 23 were elementary education majors. The writer introduced herself, sharing both professional and personal knowledge and experience about the course and about herself. Since students form impressions quickly, and those initial observations may color interactions for the remainder of the semester, this writer felt that it was important to give students something of substance during the first class, to let them know she cared about them and the course. The writer was interested to know who was taking the course and what they might bring to it. Therefore, she afforded her students the opportunity to relay a bit of information about themselves through oral discussions. This procedure permitted the writer to 'preview' her new students and to also check class rosters.

Discussion followed as to the effect of seating arrangement on total classroom environment. Students were asked to arrange their chairs in a semi-circle. Some students commented that they had never thought to consider the effects of seating children in traditional rows, where they are only able to view the back of the child's head who is seated in front.

In general, class atmosphere was 'upbeat' and students reacted positively to the new seating arrangement. The writer encouraged her students to make an effort this semester to

get to know one another, for she knew that if students knew one another, they would tend to listen to each other more closely. The writer also made an effort to learn students' names as quickly as possible, as one way of demonstrating the importance of mutual recognition and respect.

The writer reviewed the course syllabus, procedures and expectations. She discussed the potential value and intrinsic interest of the course material. During the last 30 minutes of class, the writer distributed the Student Questionnaire of Terms. In order to obtain a writing sample and follow through with this writer's contention that writing generated thinking, students were asked to reflect on how they learned to read and whether those methodologies, approaches or strategies affected how they felt about the reading process today. One to three paragraphs were written on the back of the Questionnaire and handed to the writer upon completion.

During the second week of the semester, students were afforded the opportunity to reflect on the results of the Questionnaire of Terms, by relating the three models of reading to the various terminology on the Questionnaire. They formed three cooperative learning groups which corresponded to the three models of reading, in order to develop an awareness of the connection between their beliefs and classroom practice. Peer interaction resulted through a

questioning technique modeled by the writer, linking various Top-down, Bottom-up or Interactive Theories of reading.

The Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) was distributed during the latter part of the class. The writer explained the function of the TORP as a tool in assessing one's theoretical or intrinsic beliefs about the reading process. She instructed her students to complete the Profile at home and return it at the beginning of the third class. Results were self-scored, however, the writer checked for appropriate scoring procedures. Students were informed that results of the TORP would in no way affect their final grade in the course, thus students were more apt to be honest in their responses. This data was collected during the semester, as well as at the end of the semester.

It was the intention of the writer to work with the placement coordinator and have all students placed in fieldwork classrooms by the third week of the semester. This proved to be impossible, as one of the largest placement districts was involved in a 'work slow down' in preparation for a possible teacher strike. Many of the writer's students were affected by this turn of events and were not able to be placed as early as had been anticipated. New placements were sought and fortunately, many private schools responded to our requests. As students were placed in their fieldwork classrooms, they received a Letter of Introduction (Appendix D)

to be given to their cooperating teachers. In addition, students were given an extra copy of their course syllabus to share with cooperating teachers.

From the third to the ninth week of implementation, the writer introduced a variety of reading approaches. She continued to overlay course content with practical strategy, using samples of children's work, art and music during class time. Journal writing was introduced and all students were required to keep personal journals related to fieldwork and coursework experiences. Brainstorming techniques were modeled before the students did any writing.

The writer distributed the Lesson Plan Format (Appendix G) which was used as a guide to help focus attention on goals and objectives for beginning readers. A Lesson Plan Workshop took place in which students began to formulate ideas and organize their thoughts for implementation in field placements. Students were required to teach at least three lessons in their fieldwork classrooms. One lesson had to be literature-based. A second lesson related to teacher-made materials. The third lesson was a free choice of any holistic strategy covered during the semester. This might include the use of Big Books, creative writing, poetry, journals, etc.

Of the three required lessons plans, two were critiqued by cooperating teachers. The writer critiqued the third lesson plan through direct observation in the field, and followed up with conferencing between the student, as well

as his/her cooperating teacher. Observation began during the tenth week of implementation and continued through the fifteenth week of the semester and into Final Exam week. Cooperating teachers received the Follow-Up Letter (Appendix E) and Evaluation Form (Appendix F) which assisted the writer in monitoring her students' progress. Data was collected concerning positive/negative comments.

During the latter part of the semester, the writer conducted Basal Reader Workshops. Students were required to bring samples of basals and workbooks from their fieldwork classroom to the college classroom. Now that the students had a variety of experiences in the field, as well as in their coursework, the writer felt that they were better equipped to study and reflect on this more traditional paradigm. Cooperative learning groups used samples brought to class and formulated strategies to expand basal reader programs into more holistic learning environments.

At this time, students began preparing their teacher-made materials which they were required to use in their fieldwork classrooms to supplement or enhance the more traditional approaches to beginning reading. Students also shared teacher-made materials in class through oral presentations. Data was collected comparing these oral presentations with earlier attempts, in respect to voice projection, eye contact, organizational skills, enthusiasm, ingenuity and overall professionalism. In addition, students completed

their personal journals and met with the writer to discuss results through an interview process.

As a culminating assessment tool, students were given the Conceptual Framework of Reading Inventory (Vacca, Vacca & Gove, 1991) for preservice teachers as a post-implementation indicator of change. This reflective inquiry tool further enabled students to ask questions and closely observe what was happening in their fieldwork placements. Once again, students were able to connect their beliefs about reading and how these beliefs affect their decisions about reading instruction. Students were asked to work on these at home. They were self-scored and written comments were included on the back page. Completed inventories were handed in to the writer during Final Exam week. All data was collected and organized throughout the semester, so that implementation results could be presented in a logical, comprehensible manner.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Throughout the entirety of this practicum, this writer has strived to expand prospective teachers' beliefs about the reading process through the use of whole language to enable changes in classroom practice. Her goal was to alleviate the problem of students' reluctance to explore reading methods and approaches that differed from their own intrinsic beliefs about how reading should be taught. During implementation, a variety of solution strategies related to both the literature reviewed and to the writer's philosophy about reading instruction for primary grade children were employed.

The writer's first objective was to ensure that all students will know what is meant by whole language and will be familiar with associated terms. This objective was achieved. Results of the Student Questionnaire of Terms-Revised (Appendix B) distributed at the completion of the semester indicated a markedly greater increase in recognition and understanding of terms relating to holistic methodologies and strategies, as compared to the Questionnaire administered at the beginning of the Spring 1992

semester (Appendix A).

Of the 43 students who answered the Questionnaire and gave a writing sample at the start of implementation, 38 did not even know what was meant by the term 'whole language.' Thirty-six of the students were unfamiliar with literature-based reading programs. Thirty-eight students were incognizant of the use of experience charts. Forty-one of the students were unfamiliar with dictated stories. Forty of the students did not know what was meant by authorship in reference to classroom usage. Thirty-one of the students had never seen a Big Book.

The four terms most familiar to the students were brainstorming, cooperative learning, invented spelling and journals. However, during class discussion, it was interesting to note that the very students who seemed familiar with these four terms admitted that they knew them in part, because of the words themselves. For example, 'cooperative' meant sharing or group interaction; 'invented' was something made up or original. Therefore, the writer questioned her students' familiarity with these particular terms in the true sense of holistic teaching. Further clarification of the overall results indicated on the Student Questionnaire of Terms have been included in Figure 1 (p. 54).

At the completion of implementation, the Questionnaire-Revised clearly demonstrated that students now familiar with terminology far out-numbered those students who were still a

RESULTS OF STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE
Start of Implementation

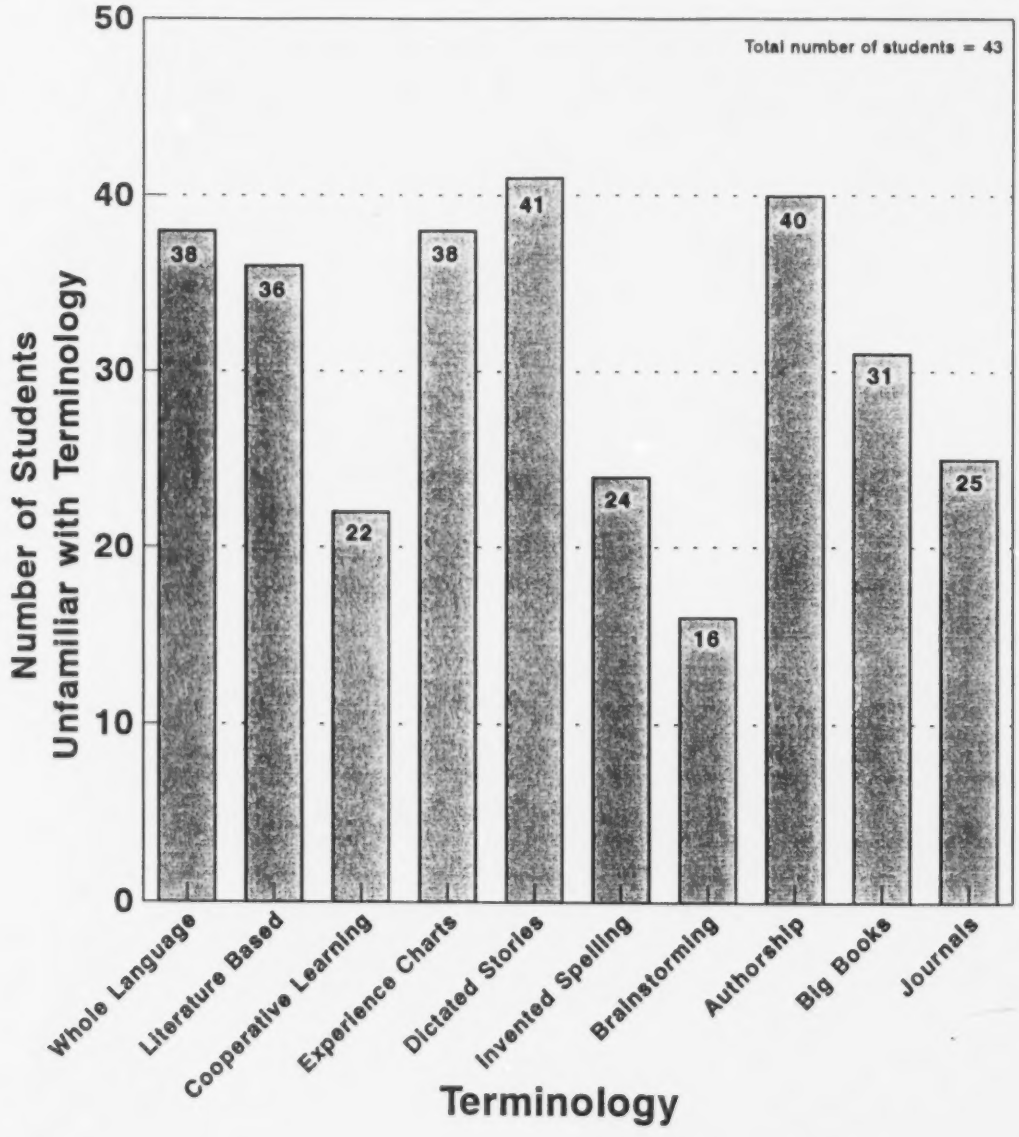

Figure 1

RESULTS OF STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE - REVISED
Completion of Implementation

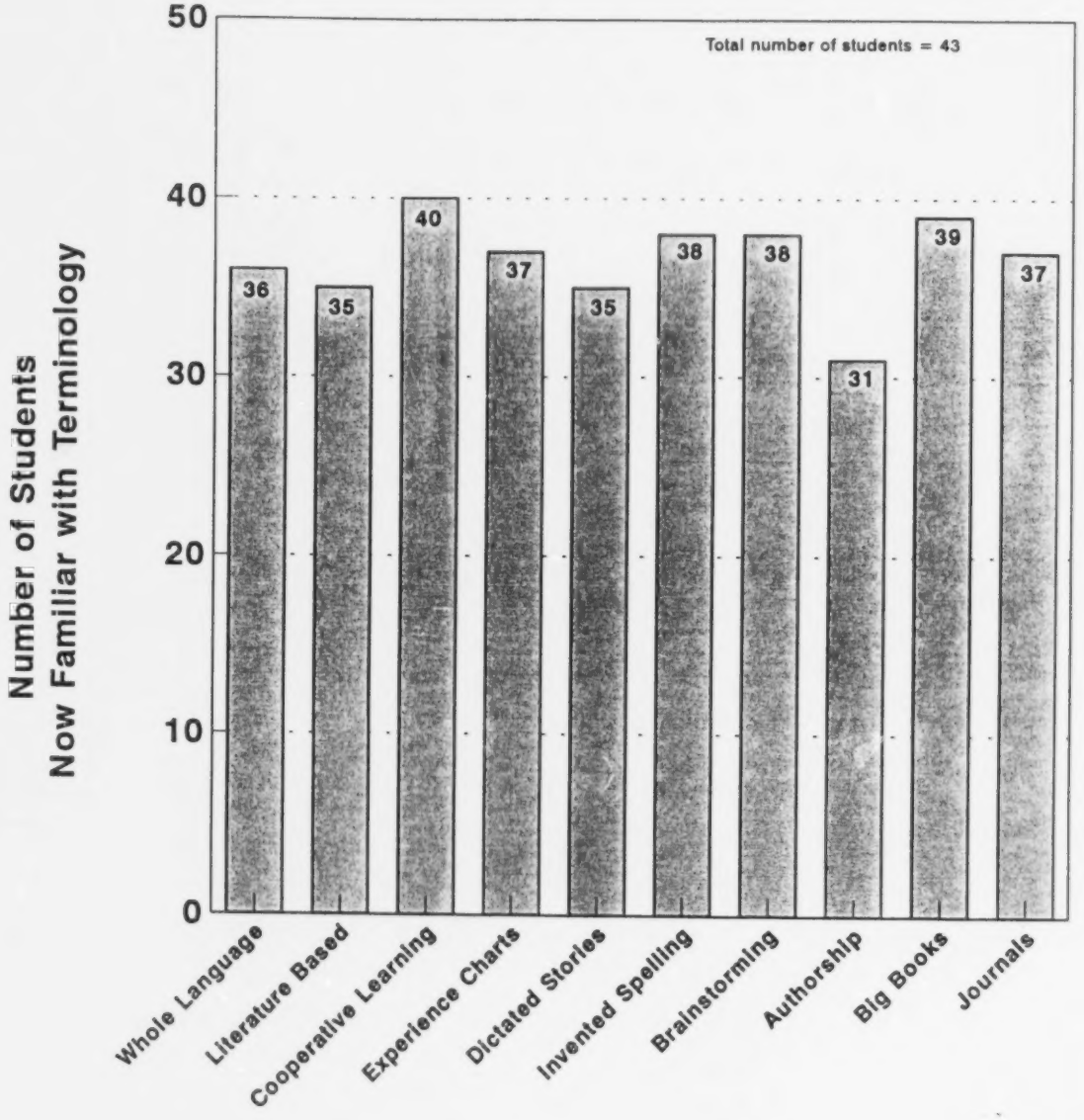

Figure 2

bit unsure. All of the writer's 43 students had some basic concept of the whole language philosophy, but 36 students now demonstrated the true nature of the term through their answers on the Revised Questionnaire. The results of the Student Questionnaire of Terms-Revised as shown in Figure 2 (p. 55) clearly indicate that the writer's first objective was attained.

Results of the writing sample were interesting. The majority of students attributed their interest in reading to role models, such as parents or teachers who were avid readers themselves. One student even commented on frequent library excursions with her mother. Four students attributed their negativism toward reading with their own learning problems. 'Low' reading groups or the frustrations of 'remedial' reading groups were cited.

Several students admitted that they often do not comprehend what they are reading and must re-read a text several times in order to clarify concepts. These same students acknowledged that they only read what is required from their courses, and would seldom consider reading for 'enjoyment.' This writer was pleased, yet surprised with the honesty and frankness of responses. Indeed, the responses offered opportunity to discuss underlying precepts of whole language and its connection to the developing young reader. It appeared that this first writing sample generated more than just the relation-

ship between writing and critical thinking. It provided an almost cathartic effect for the students as a whole.

The writer's second objective was that 2/3 of the students will demonstrate a more interactive or holistic orientation to reading instruction. This objective was achieved. Through the use of the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile or TORP (Deford, 1985) and the inclusion of cooperative grouping, students demonstrated increasing awareness of interactive or holistic concepts of the reading process. At the start of implementation, the TORP indicated that of the 43 students who completed the Profile, 12 students had a 'phonic' orientation to reading instruction and 30 students had a 'skill' orientation to the reading process. Only one student in the total of 43 had a more interactive or a more holistic orientation to reading instruction. By the completion of implementation, more than 2/3 of the students demonstrated more interactive or holistic orientations.

It was interesting to note that in addition to answering the required questions on the TORP, which was administered at the beginning of the semester, two students included written comments. One student said, "I was surprised. I always favored whole language." Yet, this same student argued that children must learn the letters of the alphabet in order to begin reading. The second student disagreed with her score which placed her in the 'phonic' orientation group. She felt that phonics meant'rigidity' and bristled

at the implication that she be placed into this category. However, this same student wrote on the TORP that she felt flash card drills were necessary for 'memorization.' She also wrote that if a child incorrectly said "house" instead of "home" during oral reading, he should be corrected. Major changes in orientation to reading instruction occurred by the end of the semester.

The procedure of forming cooperative learning groups early in the semester proved to be enlightening. Discussions about the essence of phonic, skill or holistic orientations to reading instruction were facilitated through interaction between groups. It was noted that most students readily contributed, both personally and objectively to varying viewpoints and all students were observed to be on task throughout. The use of cooperative learning groups as an outgrowth of the TORP results, provided a springboard for expanding discussions and examining different beliefs. Increasing familiarity with strategies and techniques enabled more than 2/3 of the students to demonstrate more interactive or holistic orientations to reading instruction. Thus, the writer's second objective was attained.

The writer's third objective was that all students devote 25% less teaching time to basal reader instruction and 25% more teaching time to literature based instruction. This objective was achieved for the majority of students. Results of field observations and Reports (Appendix C) indicated that

all students, but two, were attributing at least 25% more teaching time to literature-based instruction and 25% less teaching time to basal reader instruction than at the beginning of their field experience. Lessons included excellent choices of children's literature, creative teacher-made materials, flannel boards, interesting topics and a variety of multisensory learning experiences. One student even 'popped popcorn' with her kindergarteners after reading the story entitled, Popcorn, by Frank Asch.

It was noted that the two students who taught primarily using the basal reader did so because of reluctance and resistance to change on the part of their cooperating teachers. These teachers tended to be intimidated by the holistic philosophy in general and used the basal readers as their resource for reading instruction. This situation demonstrated the importance of appropriate role models for prospective teachers. On the whole, the writer's classroom visits were welcomed by cooperating teachers, and helped bridge the gap between the fieldwork classroom and the college classroom. During follow-up conferences, all students reacted positively to feedback and demonstrated ability to self-analyze their lessons. In all, the writer feels that her third objective was attained.

The writer's fourth objective was that all students will have taught at least three lessons utilizing whole language strategies discussed in class. This objective was

achieved. Mid-Semester Evaluation Forms (Appendix F) received from cooperating teachers indicated that all students had taught three or more lessons during the semester. Evaluations contained extremely positive comments on lessons that were considered "original, motivating and spontaneous" in nature. Interaction between the writer and the cooperating teachers provided opportunity for more complete monitoring of students' progress.

The writer's fifth objective was that at least 2/3 of the students will display confidence in their efforts to enhance reading instruction through the use of teacher-made materials and through a written Lesson Plan Format (Appendix G), which will include a self-evaluation. This objective was achieved. Students were praised, on the whole, by cooperating teachers who commented on their ingenuity in creating teacher-made materials. All but two cooperating teachers welcomed these additions to their classes. Reluctance to see the value of such materials was connected to "too much work" for the already "overburdened" teacher. It was interesting to note that these two cooperating teachers were the same teachers who used the basal reader as their primary resource for reading instruction.

In addition to using teacher-made materials in field-work classrooms, students shared materials in class through oral presentations and cooperative learning group interaction. Bolstered by the success of their teacher-made materials in

the field, 2/3 or more of the students displayed confidence when presenting their materials to their peers. Lesson Plans were focused and well-organized. Many comments were included on the self-reflection section of the Lesson Plan Format indicating ability to self-analyze and self-reflect. Two comments were especially worth noting:

> Teacher-made materials can be used in many different ways and can benefit not only the children, but also the teacher. I have enjoyed making the materials and implementing the game (Jena, April, 1992).

> Teacher-made materials are more than likely going to be a plus in any classroom. I feel that learning something in a fun-filled way, rather than using a ditto or worksheet page, is much more interesting for the children as well as the teacher (Lisa, April, 1992).

Oral presentations during class time afforded the students additional opportunity to enhance their overall sense of professionalism. Results during these oral presentations indicated that the writer had attained her objective.

The writer's sixth objective was that by the end of the implementation phase of this practicum, the Conceptual Framework of Reading Inventory (Vacca, Vacca & Gove, 1990) will indicate that 2/3 of the students have expanded their beliefs about the reading process and classroom practices. This objective was clearly achieved. Results demonstrated that no student held a totally 'Bottom-Up' conceptual framework to reading instruction. In fact, 26 of the writer's students were 'Interactive' and 17 held a 'Top-Down' concept of reading instruction. Thus, the writer's objective was at-

tained.

Expanding perspective teachers' beliefs about the reading process through the use of whole language resulted in yet another outcome for this writer. Literacy related activities always involve a blending of all the communication arts together- reading, writing, speaking, listening - each supporting the other. Personal journals enabled the students to organize and interpret their experiences in order to decide what to believe, feel and do. Bloom (1956) identified a variety of ways people organize or interpret information (Bloom's Taxonomy) ranging from relatively simple levels (recall, comprehension) to more complex levels (application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation). Students' reflections indicated that they were able to articulate their thinking/reasoning, and because they were receiving feedback from the writer and their field placements, improvements in reasoning abilities were noted.

> I understand whole language better and have a different view. I see that there is much work involved with a whole language classroom. I never realized that until now. I see that a teacher must evaluate and change the style of the lesson to meet the child's needs (Karen, Journal excerpt, May, 1992).

Two of the writer's students seemed to highlight their growing awareness of meeting the needs of the beginning reader through entries in their Journals.

I have found, through my placement, that children

> will be more motivated to learn if they actively participate in the learning process (Sandra, Journal excerpt, May, 1992).
>
> I have learned alot in this 'writing' assignment, and I must say that I learn best by hands-on experience in the classroom. There is nothing like it in the world (Jennifer, Journal excerpt, May, 1992).

Discussion

The writer was pleased with the results of her practicum, as her objectives were achieved. She is fully cognizant of the fact that everybody has beliefs. However, what distinguishes sophisticated thinkers is that their conclusions are informed and supported by cogent reasons and persuasive evidence. John Chaffee (1991) aptly stated, "The fact is that the reasoning process one uses to reach conclusions is often more interesting than the conclusions themselves, and it is the effectiveness of this reasoning process which often helps determine our career and life success" (p. 6). By carefully exploring situations with questions and active participation, students are able to view situations from different perspectives.

The implications of the outcomes of this practicum indicate that prospective teachers need to question their approaches to teaching reading and their beliefs about learning to read in order to become more effective in their future classrooms. Whole language is learner centered. Ridley (1990) discusses the fact that "unlike standard curr-

icula, whole language activities are as varied as the teachers who implement them" (p. 64). The majority of students who enter reading methods courses do not perceive whole language as a system based upon an entire theoretical framework of how language is developed. Students were at various stages of readiness when this writer attempted to introduce them to a new perspective in teaching reading and writing.

It has been found that children learn from each other in small groups and are patient and tolerant in tutor roles (Strickland, Morrow & Pelovitz, 1991). This literature relates precisely to how the writer's students learned to respect each other and behave attentively, politely and supportively during other students' presentations. Since whole language is not a program to be defined and mandated, but instead is a belief system that is in a constant state of evolution, everyone involved has to become a learner. The most difficult part of expanding intrinsic beliefs about the reading process is to help students recognize the beliefs that underlie instructional decisions. Students who are prospective teachers need ongoing opportunities to explore both the theory of whole language and its implications for classroom practice.

Newman and Church (1990) discuss the fact that "we teachers have been faced with a transmission view of learning and teaching. At every turn we are told how and what we should teach" (p. 25). Over the years, basal reading programs

have had an enormous influence on how reading is taught, and on the kinds of materials children read. A majority of principals and teachers believe in basals, and adhere rigidly to the directions of the teacher's manual. However, a total reading program should consist of various combinations of teacher and child interaction and selection of literature so that children develop as thoughtful proficient readers. Literature-based reading instruction means different things to different people. At this point, it "provides an umbrella for a myriad of practices" (Giddings, 1992, p. 28).

In conclusion, the demystification of whole language can be accomplished through more exposure to it. Resistance to change is usually related to misconceptions and a sense of vulnerability. Ridley (1991) refers to the fact that we must acknowledge individual variation. This creates the flexibility needed for future teachers to reflect upon, put into practice and develop their educational philosophies.

The writer supports and endorses the concept of affording students the means to clarify and make sense of themselves in order to ultimately develop their teaching skills in the context of personal growth and responsibility to the young beginning readers they will be teaching. It is obvious from the outcomes and results of this practicum that students need to have recent and frequent experiences with a more active type of learning paradigm in order to recognize the passivity of the more traditional paradigm (Benware & Deci, 1984).

Innovative teaching methodologies should be 'part and parcel' of a teacher training program. Expanding prospective teachers' beliefs about the reading process to enable changes in classroom practice through the use of whole language can evolve if the constraints are examined carefully and considered during implementation. Constraints or resistance to change are a reality which can influence transition to a new prospective. However, the challenge of change was definitely worthwhile for this writer, as substantiated by objective achievement.

Recommendations

The writer suggests two recommendations which could ultimately benefit prospective teachers in preparing to teach reading to primary children: (1) In order for students to change the beliefs and practices they have brought with them from the past, students must be given multiple opportunity to reflect on past and present experiences involving teaching and learning; (2) Course work and field experience must be integrated so that students cultivate the use of whole language in order to enable changes in classroom practice.

The writer intends to further the solution by encorporating the use of whole language philosophies in all her classes. She intends to expand on linking the college classroom to fieldwork experience by increasing communication with

all cooperating teachers through further observations, follow-up conferences and written exchanges.

Dissemination

Throughout Practicum I, this writer has been fortunate in that she has had the full support and interest of her Department. All forms used in the appendices were shared with the writer's colleagues and Chairperson. Several workshops were held, and the Child Study Department as a whole decided to use the premise of the writer's Introductory Letter to Cooperating Teachers (Appendix D) for all methods classes. In addition, other reading methods instructors, both primary (K-3) and intermediate (4-6) have expressed interest in distributing her Mid-Semester Evaluation Form (Appendix F).

During scheduled Department meetings, as well as informal meetings, the writer's colleagues have afforded her time to discuss and share her progress. The Department has supported this writer's stand on having students 'participate' more and 'observe' less in their Junior fieldwork. The writer has planned on making a formal presentation of her Practicum I to her Department. During the summer, the writer will be part of a conference relating to the possible increase of fieldwork observations during the reading methods course work.

In conclusion, the writer plans to submit her Practicum I to ERIC Clearinghouse in their reading division. She will also coordinate her findings into an article which would be applicable to either The Reading Teacher or The Journal of Reading.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE OF READING TERMS

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE OF READING TERMS

READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS: PRIMARY GRADES

CERTIFICATION: DUAL _____ ELEMENTARY _____

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. If your are unsure or do not know an answer, indicate this accordingly. This is NOT an exam, but merely a questionnaire, and will have NO effect on your grade in this course.

Using the back of this paper, write about how you remember being taught how to read in the primary grades. Do not exceed more than TWO paragraphs.

1. What is meant by whole language?

2. What are literature-based reading programs?

3. What is cooperative learning?

4. What are experience charts?

5. What are dictated stories?

6. What is invented spelling?

7. What is meant by brainstorming?

8. What is meant by authorship?

9. What are Big Books?

10. What are Journals used for?

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

CLASS/SECTION: _____

APPENDIX B

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE OF READING TERMS - REVISED

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE OF READING TERMS - REVISED

READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS: PRIMARY GRADES

CERTIFICATION: DUAL _____ ELEMENTARY _____

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. If your are unsure or do not know an answer, indicate this accordingly. This is NOT an exam, but merely a questionnaire, and will have NO effect on your grade in this course.

Using the back of this paper, write about how your beliefs about the reading process have/have not changed since the start of this semester.

1. What is meant by whole language?

2. What are literature-based reading programs?

3. What is cooperative learning?

4. What are experience charts?

5. What are dictated stories?

6. What is invented spelling?

7. What is meant by brainstorming?

8. What is meant by authorship?

9. What are Big Books?

10. What are Journals used for?

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

CLASS/SECTION: _____

APPENDIX C

FIELDWORK OBSERVATION REPORT

FIELDWORK OBSERVATION REPORT

Student_____ College Instructor_____ Date_____

School_____ Cooperating Teacher_____

Topic_____ Grade_____ Size of Group_____ Length of Lesson_____

* = Needs improvement in this developmental skill area

Appropriateness of Lesson:(considers age, ability, interest level) ____

Organization and Preparation:(includes use of teaching aids, time allotment) ____

Clarity of Presentation:(motivation, development, summary, knowledge of subject) ____

Awareness of Individual Students' Needs:(considers attention span, checks out children's understanding, allows for questions, encourages interaction) ____

Follow-up:(explanation of seat work and/or homework) ____

Handling of Students' Responses:(includes provision of feedback--praise and/or constructive criticism) ____

Rapport With Students: ____

Behavior Management:(includes handling of disruptive behavior) ____

Evidence of Enthusiasm, Creativity, Spontaneity, Patience: ____

Communication Skills: Oral ____
Written ____

Appropriateness of Dress: ____

Self-awareness:(demonstrates insight, ability to analyze lesson, awareness of importance of self-evaluation) ____

Observer's Comments and Suggestions:

Signature of Student:_____ Date:_____

Signature of Observer:_____ Conference Date:_____

APPENDIX D

INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO COOPERATING TEACHERS

Dear Cooperating Teacher,

I am most grateful to you for giving my student the opportunity to become part of your classroom this semester. Each student is required to spend one full morning a week in your classroom (more time might be necessary depending on when fieldwork actually begins). The morning spent with you each week is considered field experience for my Child Study course entitled, Reading and Language Arts: Primary Grades.

All of my students are required to take an ACTIVE role in the classroom. They are not placed to merely observe, but to be a full participant in all activities.

It is my hope that you will permit my student to teach many types of reading lessons and to afford him/her the opportunity to experiment with various strategies discussed in class. My student is required to teach at least THREE lessons. These lessons should include the use of literature, the reading/writing connection and the use of teacher-made materials.

My student is required to show you our class syllabus and assignments. During the semester, you will receive an evaluation/questionnaire which will give you the opportunity to monitor the student's progress.

If, for any reason, you need to get in touch with me to discuss my student or any related topic, please do not hesitate to call me at the college.

You are a valuable part of the process of developing the teaching skills of my student. Thank you for sharing your experience and expertise.

Sincerely,

J. Levin

Prof. Jill Levin
Child Study Dep't

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO COOPERATING TEACHERS

Dear Cooperating Teacher,

Once again, I thank you for generously accepting one of my students as a fieldwork student in your classroom this semester. It is hoped that together we can provide assistance and feedback to our students in their various experiences in teaching.

Therefore, I am asking you to take just a few minutes from your busy day to reflect on what you have seen and to evaluate this student's attitudes and abilities.

If you check the second or third box on the next page, I will call you as soon as possible. Please enclose your telephone number and the best time for me to reach you. Return your evaluation in the envelope that is included for your convenience.

Feel free to get in touch with me at any time during the remainder of the semester. Thank you for helping my student prepare for the important role of teaching reading to children.

Sincerely,

J. Levin

Prof. Jill Levin
Child Study Dep't

APPENDIX F

MID-SEMESTER EVALUATION FORM

STUDENT NAME _____

SCHOOL _____ 83

COOPERATING TEACHER _____

COURSE _____ INSTRUCTOR _____

☐ At this time the student's performance is good and his/her attendance is regular.

☐ I have some minor concerns at this time about this student's skills/potential. I would like to schedule extra time to talk with a representative of the college when the student is observed.

☐ I have major concerns about this student's skills and/or potential to teach eventually. Please have a faculty member contact me by phone.

Phone # _____

Best time to call: _____

PLEASE INDICATE AT LEAST THREE LESSONS THAT THE STUDENT HAS TAUGHT. FEEL FREE TO COMMENT.

1.

2.

3.

THE STUDENT HAS SHOWN ME HIS/HER COURSE SYLLABUS

THE STUDENT HAS NOT SHOWN ME HIS/HER COURSE SYLLABUS

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

_____
COOPERATING TEACHER'S SIGNATURE

APPENDIX G

LESSON PLAN FORMAT

LESSON PLAN FORMAT

NAME OF STUDENT_____SCHOOL_____

CHILD STUDY COURSE_____DATE OF LESSON_____

COOPERATING TEACHER_____GRADE_____SIZE OF GROUP_____

CURRICULUM AREA_____TITLE OF SPECIFIC LESSON_____

BEHAVIOR OBJECTIVE:

RATIONALE:

MATERIALS:

DEVELOPMENT/PROCEDURES:

Introduction : Motivating Activity

Instructional Strategies:

Closure:

ASSESSMENT:

SELF-REFLECTION: